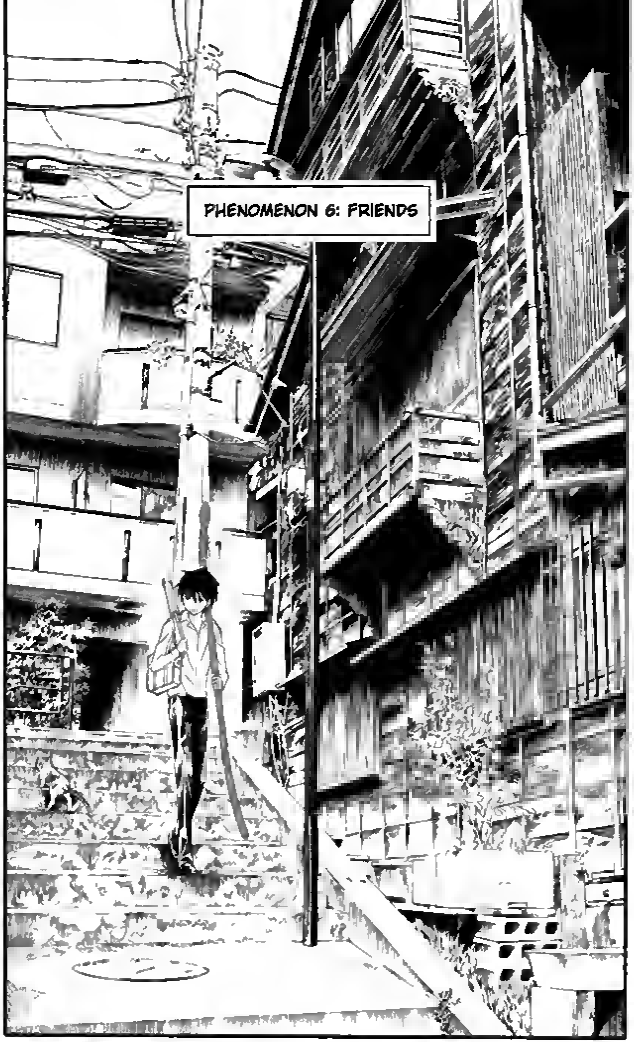

PHENOMENON 6: FRIENDS

すてい屋
すてい屋
OH
I'M IN A TIP-TOP SHAPE TODAY, TOO! Somehow!
ALRIGHT!
red
white
red

HM...?
SOMETHING SWEET...
IT'S GONE
FOR A SECOND THERE, I SMELLED...
AH!
AT ANY RATE...IT SMELLED NICE AND SWEET
I'VE SMELLED SOMETHING LIKE IT BEFORE
HMM. I WONDER WHAT IT WAS...
2-C

GOOD MORN ...
AH!
...OH?

...WHAT IS IT?
AH, WELL... UH...
WHAT'S WRONG, MISA?
WHAT IS IT?
UM...
YOU SMELL NICE!
AND SWEET!
...HUH?
WHA-
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
...WELL, THAT WAS KINDA UNEXPECTED JUST NOW.
NIKKI-CHAN SUDDENLY CALLED FOR MISAKI-SAN
AH, MISAKI-SAN... (I'D SAY SHE'S...)
I'M SURPRISED. UNTIL NOW, I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM TALK TO ONE ANOTHER.
AHAHA... THEY HAD THEIR FIRST TALK

BUT WHEN YOU WRITE "NIKKI" IN KANJI, WOULDN'T IT BE "CINNAMON"? SO, IF A GIRL USED IT AS A NICKNAME, WOULD THEY GAIN WEIGHT?
AHA... HUH? WEIGHT?
BUT "NIKKI" SOUNDS GIRLY, AND MAKES YOU THINK OF CINNAMON, DOESN'T IT? THOUGH, I KINDA LIKE HOW IT REMINDS ME OF NIKKI YANOFSKY...
HUH? IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, SAY SO~! I TOOK ALL NIGHT TO COME UP WITH IT,

I DON'T LIKE MY NICKNAME, "NIKKI", EITHER.
I-I WAS... I DON'T LIKE THAT NICKNAME.
SO, PANDA-CHAN WAS SURPRISED TOO, HUH...?

YEAH.
DIARY?
I SEE, YOU MEANT THAT "NIKKI?" I THOUGHT YOU MEANT "NIKKI" AS IN "DIARY"...

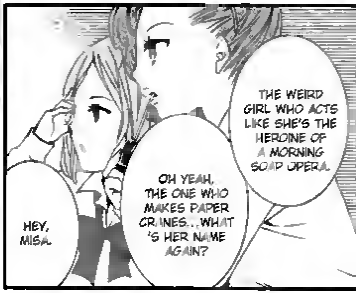
—I SEE... IF YOU'RE HAPPY, I'M HAPPY.
YAY!
HEHE...

THANK YOU SO MUCH, PANDA-CHAN.
SO I THOUGHT IT WAS A NICE NICKNAME!
YOU RECORD EVENTS IN DIARIES, SO YOU NEVER FORGET THEM, RIGHT?

IT'S A "FOX WINDOW" (SIMPLIFIED VERSION)!!
OH YEAH, FROM WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER... HOW DID MISAKI-SAN SMELLED NICE?
AH, HOW INDEED? SHE SMELLED KINDA SWEET...
WAS IT PERFUME? SHE ACTS FEMININE EVEN IN CLASS
OR IT COULD'VE BEEN THE SMELL OF HER SHAMPOO OR SOMETHING...
HMM...
I'M NOT QUITE SURE THAT'S IT... SOMEHOW IT SEEMED...
DELICIOUS.
DELI... HUH?
ALRIGHT! I WANNA SNEAK A QUICK PEAK?
? WHAT'S THAT?

MISA!
...I DON'T KNOW!

WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?
AH, WELL,
IT WAS THE TRANSFER STUDENT.


THE WEIRD GIRL WHO ACTS LIKE SHE'S THE HEROINE OF A MORNING SOAP OPERA.
OH YEAH, THE ONE WHO MAKES PAPER CRANES... WHAT 'S HER NAME AGAIN?
HEY, MISA.

OH...
YOU'RE NOT COMING OVER TODAY?
DO YOU HAVE ANOTHER JOB REQUEST?
NO...NOT TODAY...I'M MEETING UP WITH A FRIEND TO STUDY FOR OUR TEST.
I SEE.
SORRY. WILL YOU BE OKAY ON YOUR OWN?

HUH?
NIKKI-CHAN,
I'LL BE FINE I HAVE BOOKS I WANT TO READ,
AND GOLDFISH TO TAKE CARE OF.
AH OKAY. COME TO THINK OF IT, DIDN'T KON-SAN SAY HE HAD FIELD-WORK..?
YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE UNTIL NIGHT-FALL...
I'LL BE FINE I'M USED TO IT.
BU. BUT..
WHO'S THAT GIRL ?
She's my friend, Toono Akai-chan!
PLEASE EXCUSE ME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO INTRUDE, BUT IN THE END..

OH, PAN-CHAN, WELCOME. IT'S RARE FOR YOU TO EAT HERE.
MMM, WE'LL HAVE 3 MIZU MANJUU*!
OKAY!
*TN: Kuzu jelly dumplings filled with sweet bean paste, usually served cold.

MY MOM'S A REGULAR CUSTOMER HERE
MY NAME'S CHANGED AGAIN... HOW EMBARRASSING
PAN-CHAN
OH NO I LEFT MY NOTEBOOK SOMEWHERE...
AH... HA HA...
OH, THANK YOU! YOU'RE SO HELPFUL!!
SO NIKKI-CHAN, HERE'S WHAT'LL BE ON THE EXAM

WHERE'D HE COME FROM...?
OH,
WELL, FOR THE TIME BEING, WE'LL START WITH THIS PAGE
HE WORKS AT THE NEAREBY CAT CAFE
HE'S SUCH A HARD WORKER
HE'S THE YOUNGEST OF HIS SEVEN BROTH-ERS
HIS BROTHERS, YON* AND MUTSU*!
HE'S THE SHOP'S FAMOUS ATTRAC-TION
SHICHI-SAN?
WOAH! SHICHI*-SAN!
*TN: "Shichi" means "seven"
*TN: Yon" means "four" and "mutsu"
OF COURSE
THEY DO.
ANIMALS LIKE YOU, HUH?
AKAI-CHAN YOU RE AMAZING HE WARMED UP TO YOU RIGHT AWAY

AH! IT'S HERE, IT'S HERE!
HERE YOU GO! SORRY FOR THE WAIT!
SHE REALLY DOES HAVE FOX POWERS, WOOOW...

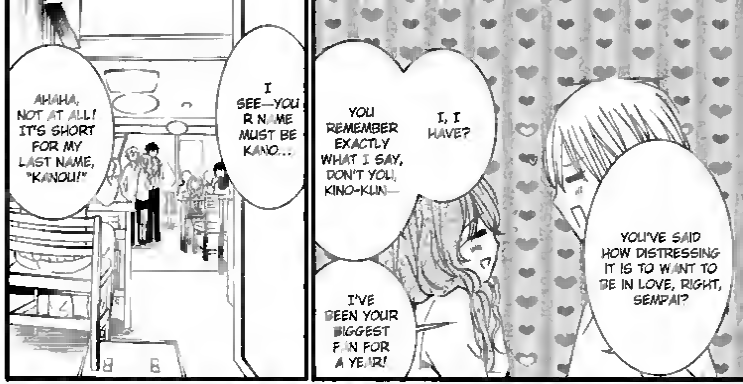
DO YOU NEED ANY-THING?
SUMI-CHAAAN! CAN YOU GET SOME KUSA MOCHI—?
YEAH YEA.
THE BEAN PASTE HAS A SMOOTH, REFINED SWEET-NESS TO IT
AHHH. IT'S SO GOOD! IT'S DIFFER-ENT FROM THE CONVENIENCE STORE KIND
DEAR ME, OF COURSE YOU CAN
I CAN EAT AS MUCH AS I WANT, RIGHT?
RIGHT ?
I KNOW

WHY ISN'T SHE COMING ?
!!
SUMI-CHAN?
SOME-HOW...
WHAT'S WRONG, SUKUNYA-S IN?
HM...

HELLO—! WHOA, IT'S CROWED
I FEEL LIKE I RECOGNIZE THIS SCENT...
...AND KANO... JO-SAN.
NISHIKI...
MA'AAAM! I'LL HAVE SOME AZUKI* ICE CREAM.
HUH? IT'S SOUMA!
KANO-SEMPAI IS NO MAN'S GIRLFRIEND SHE'S MADE SURE OF IT!
KANOJO*? HAHA, SHE'S NOT MY GIRL-FRIEND

*TN: "Kanojo" can mean "girlfriend" in Japanese.

*TN: Ice cream mixed with azuki bean paste.

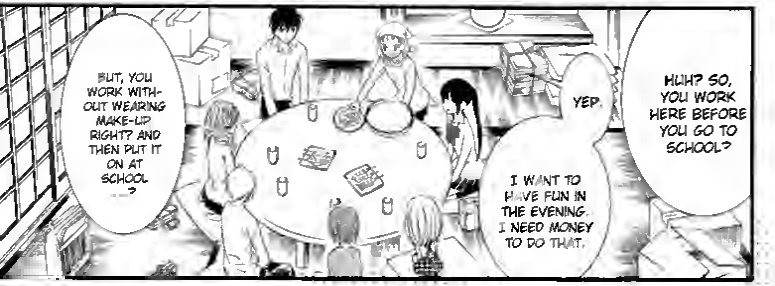

AHAHA, NOT AT ALL! IT'S SHORT FOR MY LAST NAME, "KANOU!"
I SEE—YOUR NAME MUST BE KANO...
YOU REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT I SAY, DON'T YOU, KINO-KUN—
I, I HAVE?
I'VE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST FAN FOR A YEAR!
YOU'VE SAID HOW DISTRESSING IT IS TO WANT TO BE IN LOVE, RIGHT, SEMPAI?

IT'S OKAY EHEHE.
BUT THAT'S AN EASY MISTAKE TO MAKE! LET'S START OVER!
NIKKI-CHAN DON'T SMILE.
It's too crowded. Let's go, Souma
After all, we have somewhere else to be, don't we?
WHY ARE SO MANY OF MY CLASS-MATES HERE?
THAT'S IT, I'M LEAV-ING!
AH, WE'RE GOOD. WE'RE GOOD. WE'D GET IN THE WAY.
HOW ABOUT YOU JOIN US?
WE HAVE A STUDY SESSION PLANNED FOR TODAY, BUT WE STILL HAVE TIME FOR SNACKS.

IS THAT...
MISAKI-_.SAN?
HUH?
SUMI-CHAN! SUMI-CHAAAN! DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
.....
Huh? You're okay with that?
IT'S A BIT MESSY, BUT I'LL HAVE IT STRAIGHTENED UP RIGHT AWAY
OH, IF THAT'S THE CASE YOU CAN USE THE TATAMI ROOM

SIGH, GO AHEAD...
WOW, SO THIS IS THE KITCHEN, HUH?
IT'S AMAZING
GEEZ, I NEVER THOUGHT PEOPLE FROM MY CLASS WOULD SEE ME WITHOUT MAKE-UP.
YEAH, YEAH, THIS WAY PLEASE. COME QUICKLY, OR YOUR HAIR WILL FALL INTO THE FOOD.
SO, WHY AREN'T YOU WEARING MAKE-UP?
WHAT?
THIS IS A KITCHEN ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
IT SMELLS SWEET. I SEE
THAT'S THE SMELL

I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW THAT I WORK PART-TIME AT A JAPANESE SWEETS SHOP
I THOUGHT I'D BE RIDICULED
USUALLY, I ONLY WORK HERE IN THE MORNING... I SERIOUSLY DIDN'T WANT TO WORK NOW.


HUH? SO, YOU WORK HERE BEFORE YOU GO TO SCHOOL?
YEP.
I WANT TO HAVE FUN IN THE EVENING. I NEED MONEY TO DO THAT.
BUT, YOU WORK WITHOUT WEARING MAKE-UP RIGHT? AND THEN PUT IT ON AT SCHOOL ...?

KANO-SEMPAI, YOU'RE SO KIND!
I UNDERSTAND I'M A GIRL TOO.
I'D DIE IF EVERYONE SAW ME LIKE THAT

Chemicals
Chemicals
WHEN I CHANGE INTO MY UNIFORM, I SPRAY MYSELF TO GET RID OF THE SMELL OF AZUKI BEANS.
WELL, I FRANTICALLY PUT IT ON IN A PARK BATHROOM.

—YOU FOUND OUT EASILY.
NONE OF MY FRIENDS HAVE FOUND OUT SO FAR, THOUGH.
I'M SO HAPPY I SNIFFED OUT ONE OF SUMI-CHAN'S SECRETS!
HUH?
OH YOU HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF SMELL... YOU HAVE THE MAKINGS OF A GREAT DETECTIVE SUKUIYA-SAN
EHEHE

AH! I'LL SHARE THEM WITH YOU!!
.....
FOUR DANGO* IS A LOT —SHARE HALF OF THEM WITH ME—
*T.N: Dumplings made from mochi
HEY SOUMA. SOUMA.
HER REASONING IS THE SAME AS KANO'S
STOP CALLING ME SUMI! CALL ME MISA! MISA AS IN "MISAKI"
EVERYONE CALLS ME THAT!
THE STUDY SESSION'S GOING WELL...
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY..
SEMPAI!
HEY SOUMA!
C'MON, PAY ATTENTION! YOU CALL ME MISA AT SCHOOL—
OKAY! I WILL, SUMI...! MISA-CHAN!
PLEASE COME AGAIN, EVERYONE.
THANK YOU FOR HAVING US
BYE-BYE! SEE YOU LATER!

I'M GOING WITH THEM...
I'LL DROP THE KID OFF AT HER PLACE...AND WHILE I'M AT IT, I'LL DROP OFF NISHIKI AT HERS.
Sorry for the trouble

YOUR APARTMENT IS DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET.
HUH...? SOUMA, WALK ME HOME, WALK ME HOME!
SEN-PAI, I'LL DO IT!

LET'S GO, NISHIKI.
AH, OKAY.

BYE-BYE, SUMI-CHAN! SEE YOU TOMORROW AT SCHOOL!
C'MON, PAY ATTENTION, PANDA
IT'S MISA

NISHIKI...
NISHIKI
……
If you kiss me, then I'll tell you where she is.

I CAN'T DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS AS EXCHANGE FOR SOME-THING ELSE
KANO
...
I CAN'T DO THIS.
SINCE WHEN DO MEN TREAT ME LIKE THAT?
LIKE I THOUGHT, IT CAN ONLY BE HER FAULT...
—WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE IS THAT?

WELL, WE'RE HERE
WILL YOU BE OKAY BY YOURSELF? SHOULD I COME IN FOR A BIT, AKAI-CHAN?
I'M NOT A CHILD ANY-MORE. I'LL BE FINE BY MYSELF
REALLY?? (BUT BY ALL APPEAR-ANCES YOU ARE ONE).
I'LL COME OVER EARLY TOMORROW OKAY?
SUKUIYA-SAN
ALRIGHT.
SHE'S GOING DOWN!

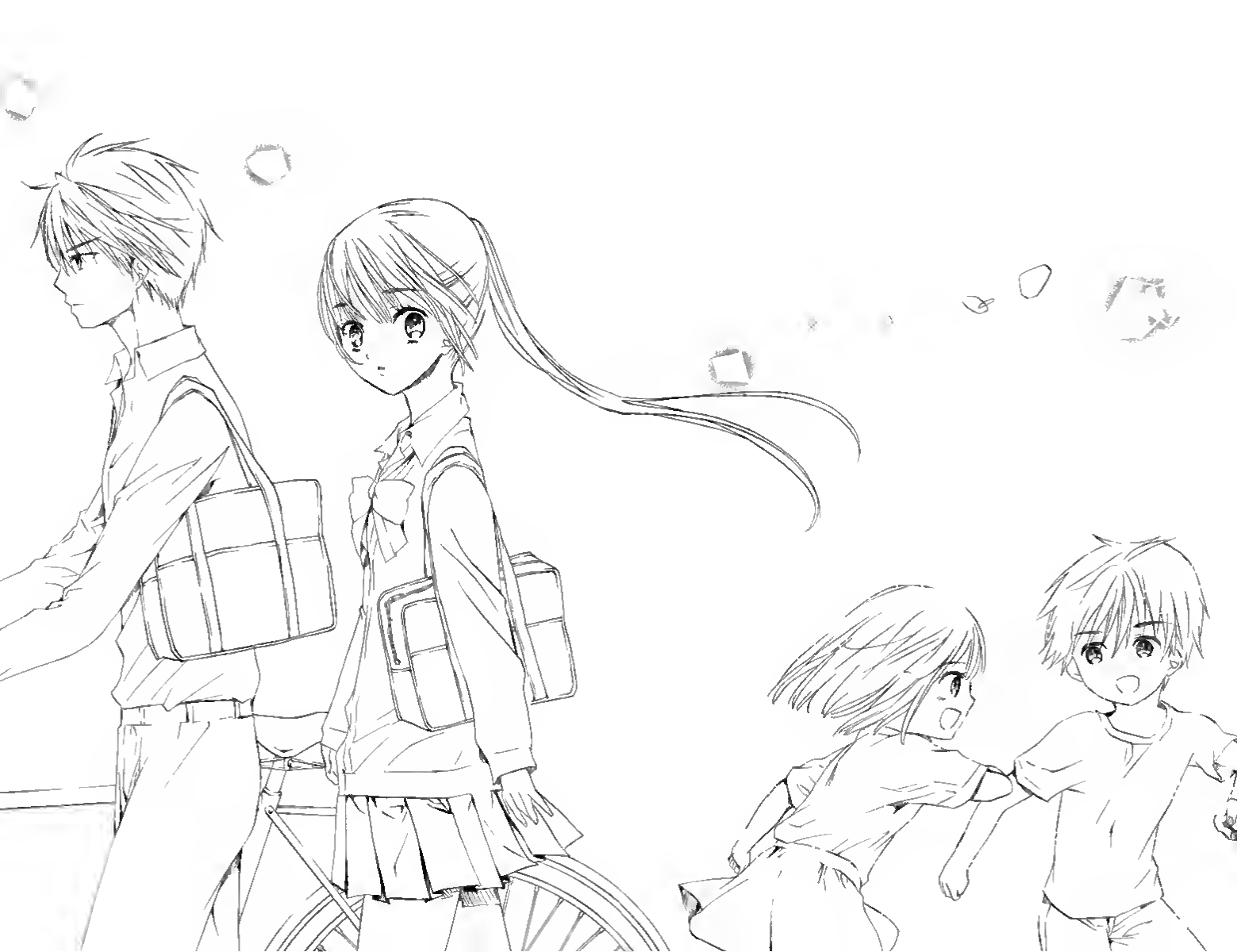
AH, THAT WAS FUN.
...YEAH.

SOUMA, DO YOU THINK-
HM?
I SHOULD KEEP A DIARY?

UP UNTIL NOW,
I WAS SCARED I'D LEAVE SOMETHING OUT IF I DID
BUT...
TODAY, I GAINED THE NICKNAME "NIKKI-CHAN,"
SO I THOUGHT.. I REALLY SHOULD TRY TO KEEP ONE AGAIN
BUT SINCE TODAY WAS SO FUN,
I THOUGHT I SHOULD REMEMBER IT
AH, WELL, BUT IS THAT DIFFERENT FROM STUDYING!? YOU HAVE TO RECORD STUFF DOWN, Y'KNOW?
BUT WELL, LIKE TODAY, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A NOTEBOOK, YOU CAN'T HAHA

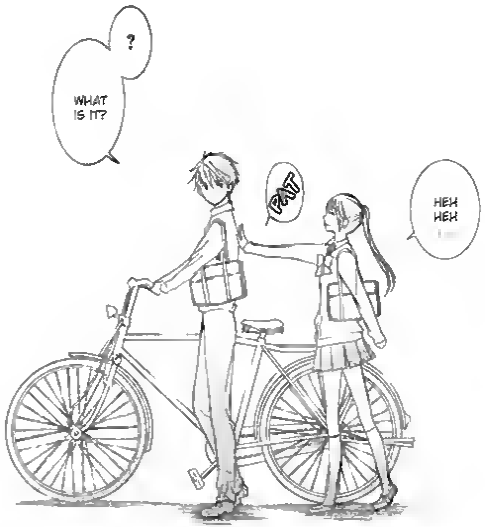
I SEE.

SOUMA... I FEEL LIKE YOU SAY THAT A LOT
REALLY?
YEAH, YOU DO
I SEE...
AHAHA, YOU DID IT AGAIN!
YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN I SAY THAT?
NOPE...
WHEN I HEAR YOUR VOICE I REMEMBER STUFF LITTLE BY LITTLE...
IT'S BIZARRE...



I SEE...
They haven't sunk as deep as I thought
Perhaps
Even if they've sunk into the depths of the dark, cold water,
Without making a sound yet again.
Memories have slipped through my fingers...
WHAT'S WRONG NISHIKI?
I WAS ABOUT TO REMEMBER SOMETHING ELSE
SOMETHING... IMPORTANT
...I'M FINE

I can almost touch him if I reach out...



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Chapter 6

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